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CIA & Congo

Moise Tshombe, in Jail, Still Influences Congo

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From an Algiers prison cell, a man with a noose over his head casts a strange spell over the 3,000-mile distant Congo.

He is Moise Tshombe, former leader of the Katanga secession, former premier of the Congo, former Madrid exile.

Hijacked to Algiers last June, he is awaiting extradition to the Congo where he is under the sentence of death for treason.

The man who wants to execute him is the Congolese president, Gen. Joseph Mobutu, who seized power in a coup d'etat.

The man who will decide whether Tshombe should or should not be extradited is Algerian President Col. Houari Boumedienne, equally brought to power by his army.

Neither of the two men on whose decision Tshombe's fate hinges was elected by popular acclaim. Neither has hesitated before political oppression.

To both of them as well as to a host of Africa's "progressive" countries, Tshombe is a criminal, the murderer of Congolese Premier Patrice Lumumba, a straw man of Western imperialism and of the powerful financial interests exploiting the Congo's riches.

Trial a Farce

Last March he was sentenced to death in absentia in the Congolese capital of Kinshasa on a vague charge of organizing a rebellion against the regime of Mobutu, his rival. The trial, like most political trials in Africa, was a farce.

His sensational kidnapping to Algiers last June 30 as he was flying in a chartered plane between two Spanish islands sparked a series of strange events in the Congo.

Shortly after Tshombe's plane was forced to land at Algiers' Maison Blanche Airport, Mobutu announced "an invasion" of the eastern Congo by white mercenaries. On July 7 he claimed a victory over the invaders—and appealed to the United States for help.

The invasion turned out to be a revolt of a mercenary commando



MOISE TSHOMBE
Held in Algiers



GEN. MOBUTU
Tshombe foe

lead by a Belgian mystic, Lt. Col. Jean Schramme.

Despite Mobutu's claims, the mercenaries—some 150 men supported by about 1,000 black Congolese troops—occupied the scenic town of Bukavu on Lake Kivu and hurled an ultimatum at the Congolese president: Tshombe should become a member of the government or else.

A Congolese colonel, Leonard Monga, formed a "government of public safety" in Bukavu and vowed "we will liberate all the provinces of the Congo in the near future."

Appealed to U.N.

The Congo promptly appealed for help from the United Nations Security Council — as if 1,000 men could be a real menace for a country of 15 million.

But the Congo is not a real country and the nucleus of the rebellion is there. In Belgium, the former colonial power which still keeps its fingers on the Congo's pulse, it is believed that the current revolt may be more serious than the previous leftist uprisings of Antoine Gizenga, Pierre Mulele and Christophe Gbenye.

The Mobutu government claims there is a definite connection between Tshombe and the revolt. It claims it intercepted radio communications between the mercenaries and their "external bases" in Portuguese Angola.

For the time being, that's how things stand. In normal circumstances, Schramme's ultimatum should expire today. But in the Congo few things are normal.

The man who perhaps could provide many answers is in a heavily guarded Algiers cell and not talking. When an Algiers tribunal decided that he should be extradited, Tshombe exclaimed "I was the victim of the CIA."

It has become common in Africa — and elsewhere — to blame the Central Intelligence Agency for almost everything. But in the Congo the CIA has intervened a number of times, and generally successfully, although its aims are not always clear.

Kept Russians Out

Up to now the United States has succeeded in keeping the Russians out of the Congo. This was accomplished by Mobutu's first coup d'etat in September 1960 and then by American backing of successive central Congolese governments against secessionists and rebels.

The U.N. attitude toward Tshombe has been as tortuous as